

ORDER IN EARLY CHINESE
EXCAVATED TEXTS

Natural, Supernatural, and Legal Approaches

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Prolegomenon

The study of newly discovered bamboo strip and silk manuscripts is one of the most exciting and fresh fields in China today. Beginning in the previous century, this globally significant topic has become one of the three main branches of scholarship on ancient China. Unlike with the finite discoveries of the Shang dynasty oracle bones or the Dunhuang manuscripts, starting the 1970s, and especially into the 1990s, there has been a continual stream of these early texts emerging from the ground. This field is thus constantly changing and evolving, and one cannot exaggerate its rapid ascent to prominence.

As these texts have been appearing for some time, previously skilled analyses of the excavated materials have already improved our knowledge of ancient Chinese civilization, history, culture, and thought, and such research continually strives to deepen and reformulate our understanding of the past.¹ We can definitely affirm, without overstating the case, that the excavated texts indeed present numerous, exciting opportunities for expanding our general knowledge of ancient Chinese culture.²

This current project unearths innovative theories about early Chinese thought from within a variety of buried books. In particular, we would like to draw attention to three mutually related aspects of ancient thought that, because of the finds, have gained prominence and undergone significant reassessment. These three will comprise the core focus of the following chapters and highlight theories of order: the natural order of cosmology, the supernatural order of divine will, and the human order of law and governance.

Such different approaches to order all emerge from a search for constancy in the world and society and often all interact in nuanced ways. For example, within the excavated materials one finds new cosmologies and perspectives on social order that reveal the union of Daoist and Legalist thought indicative of the post-Laozi Daoism that we call the “Huang-Lao tradition.” The interconnections of these topics reveal important historical developments in the conceptions of both the cosmos and society. Moreover, while many archeological texts employ abstract notions of “natural order” as a basis for human

communal organization, others also reveal a persistent belief in the supernatural and a reliance on that worldview for the establishment of political legitimacy, purpose, value, and social norms.

The many texts addressed in this project complicate and enhance our awareness of the intricate relationship in early Chinese thought between the natural and supernatural orders as sources for social organization and legitimacy. The wealth of rediscovered works now highlights the diversity of these early views and helps us to go beyond the simple evolutionary model of Chinese thought that suggested a movement from superstition to natural holism. Instead of considering the history of Chinese thought as a straight line, we should regard it as a loose net of divergent views and interests. This more realistic perspective still finds a sense of continuity in the shared search for a reliable source of order. A search we can now more fully recall.

RECOVERED MEMORIES

In every field of study new methods have the ability to open up novel paths to knowledge, but in the discipline of history, the discovery of new texts and materials holds a special place of honor that supersedes even that of methodology. In this regard, the bamboo and silk manuscripts can assist us in further confirming that which we previously understood, while also further expanding our awareness. If one proposes that history is essentially a recollection of the past,³ then the discovery of the excavated texts represents an awakening and rebirth of such memories. The events that occurred in the past (what was said and what was done) were incredibly numerous and multifarious, and so our maintained and preserved memories represent only a small fraction of what actually took place. To put it another way, in its very origin, the creation of history accompanies a massive amount of forgetfulness.⁴

In terms of storing the information of history and human thought, the bamboo and silk manuscripts represent an unusual type of memory in that they transcend the “mythologized” memories passed down over the millennia. Because the manuscripts were preserved as burial objects and only recently excavated, they are historical memories that were sealed away and forgotten and have once again arisen into the light; they are precious beyond description. Due to the large quantity of excavated manuscripts, we can now imagine how the national library at Luoyang might have looked during the Eastern Zhou, and we can more accurately speculate on the diversity present within early

Chinese civilization. Some go so far as to consider the Chinese culture recorded on bamboo and silk as representing a unique “Bamboo and Silk Civilization.”⁵

Actually, during the Zhou and Qin dynasties, Chinese culture was mostly recorded on bamboo strips, though there were also wooden and silk books as well. All the ancient texts that the Han dynasty father-son duo Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (50 BCE-23 CE) edited were most likely written on these materials. Thus, we must remember that the “bamboo book” was not only a particular manifestation of material culture but also carried the entire content of ancient Chinese civilization.

In contrast to the Western technologically based notion of the “Bronze Age,” the historical period of Early China should more accurately be termed the “Bamboo and Silk Age.” This is a broader and more syncretic understanding of what constitutes an “Age.” Its vast timespan began in the second millennium BCE with the Xia or at least the Shang dynasty (as supported by the mention of bamboo book records, *ce* 冊 and *dian* 典, in the *Shangshu* 《尚書》),⁶ and extended down to the Eastern Han and the Jin of the third century CE: this period reached its zenith during the Zhou and Western Han.

These bamboo and silk books are the creation of early Chinese civilization, and the vast information they convey about its history, culture, knowledge, and thought is invaluable. Within them, we find the foundations of all subsequent Chinese historical memory. This is why we might refer to early Chinese civilization as a “Bamboo and Silk Civilization” and use this term to indicate the rich variety and brilliance of ancient China preserved and transmitted on bamboo strips, inscribed on wooden tables, and penned on silk manuscripts. Ancient Chinese philosophy holds a prominent position in this civilization as well.

As for the recently excavated texts, they represent only a small component of the total bamboo and silk culture, but they include significant content relating to the history of Chinese philosophy and thought. These records belong to the broad category of historical memory known as “intellectual memory.” While we must admit that the most important works of early Chinese thought were all transmitted down through the ages, regaining so many precious lost components of early philosophy has revealed a world of ancient thought vaster, richer, and more varied than we could have previously imagined.

Just as Ikede Tomohisa says, “The bamboo and silk excavated materials are unquestionably profound and important resources that open new vistas in the study of the history of Chinese thought.”⁷ When compared to transmitted texts, the different excavated works, the Mawangdui bamboo and silk texts, the Qin dynasty bamboo strips of Shuihudi, the Chu kingdom bamboo strips of Guodian, and the Chu kingdom bamboo strips held by the Shanghai Museum unveil novel components of ancient thought that significantly alter our previous conceptions.

NATURAL ORDER

One of the profound revelations from the buried texts is the importance and variety of early Chinese cosmogonic speculation. Emblematic of this trend are the works found in the end of the twentieth century at Mawangdui, Guodian, and among Shanghai Museum’s collection. Most of the texts within these three groups belong to either Confucianism or Daoism (including Huang-Lao), and the content of these rediscovered manuscripts confirm that Confucians of this period were not particularly concerned with the realm of metaphysics. This signifies a major contrast between the teachings of early Confucianism and early Daoism, as the latter often engaged with questions concerning the origin of the universe and the creation of Heaven, Earth, and the ten thousand things.

Among the newly excavated materials, one finds “The Way’s Origin” (“Dao Yuan” 《道原》) within *The Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi sijing* 《黄帝四经》) found at Mawangdui, *The Great One Birthed Water* (*Taiyi shengshui* 《太一生水》) from Guodian, and *The Primordial Constant* (*Hengxian* 《恒先》) and *All Things Are Forms in Flux* (*Fanwu liuxing* 《凡物流形》) from the Shanghai Museum’s collection. These four are notable for preserving metaphysical theories lost for thousands of years, and there is a general consensus among Chinese scholars that these texts all belong to the Daoist or Huang-Lao traditions.

Among these recovered works, there exist two types of metaphysics: ontology and cosmology. “The Way’s Origin” belongs to the first type, while *The Great One Birthed Water*, *The Primordial Constant*, and *All Things Are Forms in Flux* represent the second. The key distinction of these two types is that ontology investigates the foundational nature that unifies everything, while cosmology addresses how the universe and all the ten thousand things were created and why

they continue to transform. Previously, Han dynasty metaphysics was classified as “cosmology,” and Wei-Jin Neo-Daoist and Song-Ming Neo-Confucian metaphysics were identified as “ontology,” but the excavated texts reveal a less linear history of thought.

“The Way’s Origin” affirms the Way as the foundational body that supports all creation and is quite comparable to the view found in “The Great and Venerable Teacher” 《大宗師》 chapter of *Zhuangzi* 《莊子》.⁸ Actually, this conception of the Way represents a similar but more developed version of Daoist metaphysics found in the “The Way’s Origin” (“Dao Yuan” 《道原》) chapter of the *Wenzi* 《文子》 and the “Originating in the Way” (“Yuan Dao” 《原道》) chapter of the *Huainanzi* 《淮南子》. In these three texts, the Way mainly appears as an ontological reality, in contrast to the *Laozi*’s mostly cosmological depictions and explanations of it. However, by supplementing the content of the two received texts, the Mawangdui version of “The Way’s Origin” has enriched and expanded our understanding of Daoist ontology. This is especially true for its equation of the Way and the One, as it says of the Way that “the One is its style name.”⁹ By using the One to discuss the Way, the text explicitly names the Way as the foundational nature that unifies the diversity of the ten thousand things.

Laozi’s metaphysics includes both ontology and cosmology but prioritizes cosmology. Previously our understanding of pre-Qin Daoist cosmology mainly relied on the key passage in *Laozi* Chapter 42: “The Way birthed the One, the One birthed the Two, the Two birthed the Three, and the Three birthed the ten thousand things.”¹⁰ This model is both staggeringly simple and unnervingly vague. Beyond this, all we had was Zhuangzi’s metaphysics which presented a heavy dose of *qi* transfiguration theory but lacked a clear cosmological model. Now, *The Great One Birthed Water*, *The Primordial Constant*, and *All Things Are Forms in Flux* provide new sources for understanding the cosmological side of early metaphysics.

These discoveries have revealed how Daoist cosmology developed after Laozi. Notably, within the cosmological models of *The Primordial Constant*, *The Great One Birthed Water*, and *All Things Are Forms in Flux*, the “Way” *Dao* 道 is not the supreme central concept. In *The Primordial Constant*, the core term is the eponymous “Primordial Constant” Hengxian 恒先, in *The Great One Birthed Water* it is the “Great One” 太一 *Taiyi*, while in *All Things Are Forms in Flux* it is simply the “One” *Yi* 一.

These three key terms form the center of each texts’ distinctive cosmology and cosmogony. The cosmogonic process in *The Primordial*

Constant proceeds as follows: the Primordial Constant → Space → *Qi* → the Manifest → the Beginning → Movement. Following a detailed analysis of other explanations found in the text, we more or less are able to understand what each of these stages represents. However, in the case of *The Great One Birthed Water*, a more complex process of cosmic creation and transformation has been depicted as: the Great One ↔ Water (Great One) ↔ Heaven ↔ Earth → Spirit and Illumination → Yin and Yang → the Four Seasons → Cold and Hot → Dry and Wet → the Year. This model presents something much more intricate because during the first few steps the newly created components continually return to the previous stage before being able to divide again and generate the next step. The text terms this shift “returning to assist” *fanfu* 反輔. Yet, after the emergence of Heaven and Earth, the subsequent stages either depict the simultaneous creation of opposite pairs or multiple interrelated factors like the four seasons. The text calls these “repeated mutual assistance” *fuxiangfu* 復相輔.¹¹ Together, the two types of “assistance” represent binary relationships and complicate the model of simple linear cosmic emergence. Lastly and most simply, *All Things Are Forms in Flux* says, “The One birthed the Two, the Two birthed the Three, the Three birthed the Mother, and the Mother completed the Congelations.” This includes heavy shades of *Laozi* Chapter 42.

Although concepts used in the cosmological models of *The Primordial Constant*, *The Great One Birthed Water*, and *All Things Are Forms in Flux* were all influenced by Laozi to differing degrees, they also used novel ideas and terms beyond his own core concepts. Thus, Laozi’s and their cosmologies noticeably diverge. Most significantly, they present more detailed depictions of the process of creation. The discovery of these three texts confirms that the problem of cosmology remained a core issue of Daoist philosophy and hints at the variety that existed during this more historically advanced stage of Daoist metaphysics.

The three previous explanations of the origin and creation of the universe help to substantiate the view that ancient Chinese cosmology primarily involves theories of “generation” and not “creation,” “birthing” and not “constructing.” Pondering the origin of the cosmos, the Daoists were perhaps inspired by observing the reproduction of humans and animals as they envisioned the universe coming about through a process of pregnancy and birth. This sort of cosmology could be called a “birthing model of cosmology,” and the Daoist establishment of this new “procreative metaphysics” provided a long-lasting source of inspiration for Chinese thinkers.

As a matter of fact, after the universe was birthed, it existed for an extremely long time and covered a profoundly vast space. However, as surely as it began, the life of the universe must come to an end, a view that happens to concord with beliefs in contemporary physics that the universe will eventually disperse. Significantly, ancient Chinese cosmologists were only concerned with the process of the emerging cosmos, and never considered the issue of a final reversion to its origin. Therefore, they were not “Finalists” let alone “Eschologists.” They remained focused on understanding the origin of cosmic order, that constant source of stability.

SUPERNATURAL ORDER

Though the abstract and naturalistic models of cosmology found in lost texts represent a major strand among the early attempts to find a constant and reliable order in the cosmos, the archeological materials have also taught us much about the religious beliefs of the Eastern Zhou and early theories of divine will. These discoveries complicate a commonly held model of Chinese intellectual history.

It is generally believed that the transition from the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Western Zhou) to the Eastern Zhou involved a shift from “religion” to “philosophy.” More concretely this has been described as a pivot from the belief in the Will of Heaven *Tianyi* 天意 or Divine Will *shenyi* 神意 toward a humanism that emphasized human subjectivity and the value and function of the individual and a naturalism that did not rely on any supernatural power to explain the cosmos or its constituents.

Because of abruptness of this shift, the appearance of the early Chinese philosophical masters in the Eastern Zhou (771–221 BCE) has been called China’s “Axial Age.” That is to say, the philosophies of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods represent a creative and diverse break from past religious beliefs, and this original moment of awakening is seen as the fountainhead of all later Chinese thought.

When only considering large trends and circumstances, the reductionism of the Axial Age model and the notion of linear transformation from religion to naturalistic philosophy rest on stable ground. It is especially pertinent to the shift represented by Daoist thought and Confucianism’s progression from Mencius to Xunzi, as the Daoists and Xunzi indeed propounded new philosophical stances concerning a naturalistic Way of Heaven, natural humanism, and the subjectivity of the human mind. Furthermore, within Zhuangzian and Xunzian

style naturalism, the divine nature and divine will of Heaven 天 *Tian* were completely excoriated, and Heaven was transformed into a purely natural ideal, a standard of value, and a natural order.

However, due to recent archeological discoveries, we have become more cognizant that the religious beliefs of the Three Dynasties persisted during the transformative age of the Eastern Zhou, and often appeared in modified forms in the writings of that period's philosophical masters. One classic example is Mozi's views on the Will of Heaven *Tianzhi* 天志 and the "spirits and gods" *guishen* 鬼神. We can firmly say along with the dominant Eastern Zhou trends of humanism and naturalism, we can find another cultural scene filled with staunch views on the Will of Heaven and the spirits and gods. The conspicuousness of Mozi's religious views forces us to admit that the philosophers of the Eastern Zhou were not solely promoting naturalistic notions of the Way of Heaven. Furthermore, when approached without secular bias, the *Analects* 《語語》 and the *Liji* 《禮記》 proclaim to us that Confucius and many non-Xunzian Confucians, in fact, had not divorced themselves from the ancient religious traditions of honoring spirits and gods.

This last claim requires in-depth explication, as it runs counter to popular narratives about early Confucianism. We assert that Confucius did by no means reject the existence of Heaven, the Mandate of Heaven *Tianming* 天命, or the spirits and gods. He said, "Respect the spirits and gods, but keep them at a distance."¹² By this we propose he did not mean that people are "estranged from the spirits and gods," but instead that one should "honor and respect the spirits and gods, and not profane them."

Support for this reading comes from the *Guoyu* 《國語》. That text mentions "severing the communication between Heaven and Earth,"¹³ This statement does not negate the divinity of Heaven or promote estrangement from it but actually represents a solemn proclamation about the boundaries between gods and men, and the importance of preventing "the people from having a hodgepodge of deities that cannot be clearly differentiated" or "individuals giving offerings as their own families' shamans."¹⁴ The key aim of the passage is for the ruler to regain a monopoly on religious order and divine power to promote the idea that "people and gods have different roles, and so [people should] respect them and not profane them."¹⁵ Following this textual support, the *Guoyu* statement that "[people should] respect them and not profane them" becomes a revealing gloss to the *Analects*' saying, "Respect the spirits and gods, but keep them at a distance." Confucius

is not rejecting supernatural beings, but is promoting the maintenance of sacred and profane categories.

To further support this more religious reading of the *Analects*, we turn to the “Biaoji” 《表記》 chapter of the *Liji* 《禮記》 which provides a record of the religious traditions of the Three Dynasties. It says:

The way of the Xia dynasty was to honor the mandate, and serve the spirits and respect the gods but keep them at a distance... The [rulers] of the Shang dynasty honored the gods, and led the people in serving them. Thus, they prioritized spirits before ritual propriety... The [rulers] of the Zhou honored ritual propriety and valued engagement. They served the spirits and respected the gods, but kept them at a distance.¹⁶

This passage illustrates the different methods people used during the Three Dynasties to serve the spirits and gods and does not indicate that during those periods people neglected or were estranged from these supernatural beings. Consequentially, Confucius stating, “Earnestly caring for the people, while respecting the spirits and gods but keeping them at a distance, can be called wisdom,” should definitely not be interpreted to mean, as is so common, that Confucius values only the human and rejects or neglects the divine.

Those who promote the popular view that Confucius distanced himself from spirits and gods affirm this stance by relying on the passage, “The Master did not speak about the extraordinary, strength, disorder, or gods.”¹⁷ Yet, looking closely one finds this reading rests on questionable interpretive decisions.

Such analysis of this famous passage can be traced to the commentary of Wang Su 王肅 (195–256) who explains:

“Extraordinary” means “bizarre,” “strength” refers to feats like Ao pulling the boat, or Wu Huo lifting a weight of 30,000 catties, “disorder” refers to ministers killing kings and sons killing fathers, and “gods” refer to the affairs of spirits and gods. Some of these contribute nothing to teaching and transforming people, and some of these are not worthy of mention.¹⁸

While I generally accept the interpretations of Wang Su, in this case the alternative reading of Li Chong 李充 (c. 323) that appears in the *Lunyu jijie* 《語語集解》 is worth considering instead. The key shift is that instead of seeing the four characters on which Confucius does

not speak as the individual terms “extraordinary,” “strength,” “disorder,” and “gods,” Li Chong suggests these actually should be read as the two compounds “strange powers” and “disordered gods.” He explains:

Powers that do not follow the normal order are called strange powers.
 Gods that do not follow the proper order are called disordered gods.
 Strange powers and disordered gods are grouped with evil and contribute nothing to education. Thus they are not discussed.¹⁹

Incorporating Confucius’ view on spirits and gods explained above, Li Chong’s reading seems to accord with Confucius’ original intent. That is to say, Confucius certainly did not reject spirits and gods and actually offers discourse on these beings.

This understanding of the religiosity of Confucius and Confucians finds multiple sources of support within the excavated manuscripts. For example, in *The State of Lu’s Great Drought* (*Lubang dahan* 《魯邦大旱》) discovered among the bamboo strip collection of the Shanghai Museum, Confucius proposes to Duke Ai two methods to control the disaster. The first involves correcting the use of punishment and virtue, and the second entails sacrificing to the rivers and mountains.²⁰ In this regard Confucius was continuing the great traditions of the Three Dynasties that approached the issues of cosmic and social order from a religious and moral angle.

The rich body of texts in the Shanghai Museum collection further includes a manuscript called *The Three Virtues* (*San De* 《三德》) that seems to explain Confucian religious beliefs.²¹ Carefully investigating this text reveals it to be filled with naturalistic approaches to the Way of Heaven, as well as discourses on the divine nature of Heaven and the will of the gods. It uses many religious expressions like “Heaven” *Tian* 天, “God of Heaven” *Tianshen* 天神, “August Heaven” *Huangtian* 皇天, “Lord on High” *Shangdi* 上帝, “Heaven’s Rituals” *Tianli* 天禮, “Mandate of Heaven” *Tianming* 天命, “spirits and gods” *guishen* 鬼神, “Heaven sent disasters” *Tianzai* 天災, “Supreme Heaven” *Shangtian* 上天, and “ritual sacrifice” *jisi* 祭祀. It also reveals a theory of calamities and anomalies that suggest that it is Heaven which sends these “natural disasters.” We consider this a lost work of the Confucian tradition that reflects the religious and theological views of Eastern Zhou Confucians.

The religious concerns of *The Three Virtues* do not focus on human salvation or liberation, but on the preservation, ordering, and stabilization of the empire and its states. This represents a continuity of activity

and form where the “Way of Heaven” *Tiandao* 天道 and the “Way of Humanity” *Rendao* 人道 interact, and the “Will of Heaven” *Tianyi* 天意 and the “Will of Humanity” *Renyi* 人意 are mutually bound together. This type of synthesis combines differentiation and intimate involvement; it is religious and also naturalistic; it combines “governing with the constant” and “governing with virtue” with “establishing the way of gods to govern” and “unifying gods and governance.” This vision that integrates cosmic and social order provides a new hybrid example of the search for a stable foundation of existence.

This confidence in the cosmic justice of Heaven appears somewhat weakened in another text from the Shanghai Museum, *The Divine Insight of Spirits and Gods* (*Guishen zhi ming* 《鬼神之神明》). There one can observe a previously unknown Eastern Han perspective on divine beings that is neither as naturalistic nor as idealistic as texts like *The Three Virtues*. When compared to the three *Mozi* chapters on “Shedding Light on Spirits” 《明鬼》 that provide prolonged theologically resolute expositions on the belief in these supernatural beings, the small size of the lost text *The Divine Insight of Spirits and Gods* seems trivial. However, the text’s stance, that sometimes spirits and gods have divine insight and sometimes they do not, reveals a view on divinity that significantly diverges from that of either Mozi or Confucius. This perspective affirms that accepting the existence of spirits and gods must entail an admission that their bestowal of rewards and punishments is inconstant and their surveillance of human activity incomplete.

Such a view is a major adjustment to the Confucian and Mohist convictions that spirits and gods universally “provide fortune to the good, and bring calamity to the evil” or the notion that good and evil people always get what they deserve, and so it should be considered an ambiguous take on the divine that contains a measure of skepticism. The discovery of this lost manuscript has provided a small window into the previously unrecognized diversity of religious beliefs during the Eastern Zhou and represents a unique instance where the active search for observable constancy in the cosmos comes into tension with tradition.

LEGAL ORDER

Our final theme concerns the renewed understandings of the legalistic manifestation of a “communal rationality” in the Huang-Lao tradition and the importance of the consistency of law during the Qin. As for the pre-Qin Daoist philosophical lineage, we have long possessed

a strong grasp on the development of its thought from Laozi to Zhuangzi and have frequently stressed the importance of Zhuangzi's individualism and political and civil disobedience within that early tradition. However, this approach dilutes Laozi's philosophical enthusiasm for politics and his political insights on ruling with nonaction, and obscures the connection of this political thought to the Huang-Lao tradition.

Previously, because transmitted texts like *Guanzi* 《管子》 and *Shenzi* 《慎子》 had not received much attention and the works of the Huang-Lao tradition had been lost, we were unable to recognize that the post-Laozi Huang-Lao tradition integrated components of Legalism and Confucianism. Yet, with the discovery of the Mawangdui silk manuscript *The Four Classics of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi sijing* 《黄帝四经》), these previous impediments to Huang-Lao research were shattered. Relying on this new work, we now understand how the political philosophy of Laozi was received and transformed by the Huang-Lao tradition. "Naturalness and non-activity" are Laozi's highest principles that are used to control and limit the power of the ruler and reject interventionism, maintain a state of purity, stillness, and nonaction so that everyone can manage their own affairs in their own way. Yet, Laozi's "Way of naturalness and non-activity" is highly abstract and weak on implementability. He appeals to cosmic constants, but never provides concrete guarantees to ensure that the ruler will consistently employ said constants.

By incorporating the Legalist notion of a "system of laws" into Laozi's political thought, the Huang-Lao tradition established a Way-centric conception of natural laws that functioned as a foundation for a transcendent and unified legal system. The formation of this unified and universal system finally provided an objective guarantee for the ruler to follow the ideal of nonaction and not arbitrarily or unfairly impose his whims on the people. The reason that the ruler can be "non-active" is because of the existence of this unified system of laws, which operates as a standard of measure for human behavior and a guarantee of national and governmental order. Moreover, this legal system can operate as a standard measure for human behavior because it accords with human nature and the natural order.

As people naturally seek to gain and avoid harm, reward based laws are effective; similarly, as people flee injury and fear death, punishment based law are also effective. In this sense, the ruler's approach of following what is "natural" for the hundred clans becomes laws that accord with human nature. From this origin, we can easily understand why the Huang-Lao tradition emphasizes the legal system, and why

it promotes “the way of still accord” and “according and following.” This new view reveals a major change in post-Laozi Daoist political philosophy and explains why Huang-Lao focuses so heavily on politics.

This ideal of a single legal system emerged from the Legalism of Qin. That tradition and its association with the first Chinese empire has historically been reviled by Confucians and historians due to the infamous instance when Qin Shihuang “burned books and buried scholars” in an effort to forcibly create a single unified society. With the discoveries of the numerous Qin legal documents at Shuihudi, we have a new understanding of the importance of law within the political life of Qin officials and the complexities of implementing a single constant standard within a diverse empire.

SUMMATION

We are greatly inspired by the continued revelations emerging from the yellow earth of China. The scores of excavated documents not only affirm the existence of the Silk and Bamboo Age but also arouse new appreciation for the diversity and sophistication of ancient Chinese thought.

This collection of essays hopes to offer renewed insight into how the ancient Chinese viewed the universe (supernatural or natural) and how those views related to their search for social order and stability during the Warring States and into the early Han. In all cases, these thinkers and writers expressed the importance of a constant foundational order, or relied on this lever to question sources of such order, as is the case of *The Divine Insight of Spirits and Gods*. This longing for something stable on which to build a peaceful and prosperous society stimulated great creativity and led to rich conceptualizations of the universe, its functions, its gods, and the rule of law.

We are grateful for these findings that have both historical and philosophical value and look forward to future discoveries that will only further broaden our perspective on these questions and many others.

APPENDIX 1: *THE GREAT ONE*
BIRTHED WATER (TAIYI SHENG SHUI)
《太一生水》

This text was discovered in the Chu tombs of Guodian and accompanied the Guodian *Laozi* B manuscript. It includes a total of 14 bamboo strips with some lacuna and was prepared and transcribed by specialists at the Jingmen Museum.¹ Using that original transcription as a base, the author's following edition of the text incorporates the work of Li Ling 李零, Qiu Xigui 裘锡圭, and Chen Wei 陈伟. The terminus of each bamboo strip is numbered below according to the original transcription.² [Translator's Note] The following translation is based on the authors's personal reading of the text.

TRANSLATION

The Great One birthed [the original] Water. [The original] Water returned to assist the Great One and thus they formed Heaven. Heaven returned to assist the Great One and thus they formed Earth. Heaven and Earth repeatedly interacted [**Strip 1**] and thus they formed Spiritual Power and Luminosity. Spiritual Power and Luminosity repeatedly interacted and thus they formed [the two opposite powers] Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang repeatedly interacted and thus they formed the Four Seasons [of spring, summer, fall, and winter]. The Four Seasons [**Strip 2**] repeatedly interacted and thus they formed Cold and Hot. Cold and Hot repeatedly interacted and thus they formed Wet and Dry. Wet and Dry repeatedly interacted and thus they formed the Year [**Strip 3**], ending [the process]. Therefore, the Year is that which Wet and Dry birthed; Wet and Dry are that which Cold and Hot birthed; Cold and Hot are that which the Four Seasons birthed; the Four Seasons [**Strip 4**] are that which Yin and Yang birthed; Yin and Yang are that which Spiritual Power and Luminosity birthed; Spiritual Power and Luminosity are that which Heaven and Earth birthed; Heaven and Earth [**Strip 5**] are that which

the Great One [with the assistance of Water] birthed. Consequently, the Great One is concealed within Water, and [endlessly] moves with time. Its movement pervades all things and is their beginning. [Because of this], it [naturally] considers itself **[Strip 6]** the Mother of the ten thousand things. It is both empty and full, and [naturally] considers itself the root of the ten thousand things. [The Great One] is that which Heaven cannot eliminate and that which Earth **[Strip 7]** cannot stifle, and that which Yin and Yang cannot form. The superior person's understanding of this [Truth] is called wisdom. Not understanding this [Truth] is called ignorance. **[Strip 8]**

Below is soil and so we call it Earth. Above is air (*qi* 氣) and so we call it Heaven. The Way is [the Great One's] style and clear and dark are its names. **[Strip 10]** Anyone who relies on the reputation of the Way to manage affairs will be able to complete them and personally gain prominence. The sage also relies on its reputation in handling affairs **[Strip 11]** and so is able to realize his achievements and become personally secure. [The air as] Heaven and [the soil as] Earth are names and styles concurrently established. Therefore if one exceeds its position they lose their mutual balance and will not remain for long. **[Strip 12]** The Way of Heaven values weakness. It [always] hampers the [strong and] developed to support the [weak and] developing and [always] diminishes the strong [and great] to supplement the weak [and small]. Consequently, **[Strip 9]** Heaven is deficient in the northwest and so [Earth] below can have height and strength. [Similarly], Earth is deficient in the southeast and so [Heaven] above can have lowliness and weakness. [The principle of the Way of Heaven's movement is that] because there is deficiency above **[Strip 13]**, there can be excess below; because there is deficiency below there can be excess above.

MODERN CHARACTER TRANSCRIPTION

太一生水。水反輔大一，是以成天；天反輔大一，是以成地；天地[復相輔] **【簡1】**也，是以成神明；神明復[相]輔也，是以成陰陽；陰陽復相輔也，是以成四時；四時 **【簡2】**復[相]輔也，是以成滄熱；滄熱復相輔也，是以成濕燥；濕燥復相輔也，成歲 **【簡3】**而止。故歲者，濕燥之所生也；濕燥者，滄熱之所生也；滄熱者，[四時之所生也]；四時 **【簡4】**者，陰陽之所生[也]；陰陽者，神明之所生也；神明者，天地之所生也；天地 **【簡5】**者，太一之所生也。是故，大一藏於水，行於時。周而又[始]，[以己為] **【簡6】**萬物母；一缺一盈，以己為萬物經。此天之所不能殺，地

之所【簡7】不能埋，陰陽之所不能成。君子知此之謂[智，不知此之謂愚]。【簡8】

下，土也，而謂之地；上，氣也，而謂之天。道也其字也，清昏其名。以【簡10】道從事者必托其名，故事成而身長；聖人之從事也，亦托其【簡11】名，故功成而身不傷。天地名字并立，故過其方，不使相[當，無久長]。【簡12】天道貴弱，削成者以益生者，伐於強，積於[弱。是故，【簡9】天不足]於西北，其下高以強；地不足於東南，其上[低以弱。不足於上]者，【簡13】有餘於下，不足於下者，有餘於上。【簡14】

APPENDIX 2: *ALL THINGS FORMS IN FLUX* (*FANWU LIUXING*) 《凡物流形》

This text is one of the Chu bamboo works housed by the Shanghai Museum. It has two editions which the compiler, Cao Jinyan 曹锦炎, includes in the seventh volume of the museum's manuscripts as A and B. The A edition has a total of 30 strips and is nearly complete. Corrupted sections exist, but they can be resolved through reference to the B edition. The transcription presented below takes the original transcription as its base text but also incorporates the insights of Shen Pei 沈培, Li Rui 李锐, Gu Shikao 顾史考, Wang Zhongjiang, and the Graduate Students Reading Association at Fudan University's Excavated Texts and Ancient Script Research Center.¹ [Translator's Note] The following translation is based on the author's personal reading of the text.

TRANSLATION

All things are forms in flux, [but] what do they obtain to come into being? These forms in flux become [bodies of] substantive structure, [but] what do they obtain to [continue their existence and] not die? After they come to be and [continue] to exist, why do they cry and moan? Since all things have a root and an origin, what [came] after [Strip 1] and what [came] before? The order of yin and yang, how is it stable [and unchanging]? The [concurrence and] harmony of water and fire, what do they obtain to be indivisible? I have heard it said: "People are forms in flux, [so] what do they obtain to live? [Strip 2] These forms in flux become [bodies of] substantive structure, [so] what do they lose to die? They once again obtain [it] and come [to life], [but] I do not know the reason. Heaven and Earth established the ends and the beginnings [of the myriad things], and Heaven sent down the Five Measures, [but] what [Strip 3] [parts of the myriad things] are horizontal and what [parts] are vertical? The Five *Qi* arrive together, [but] how are they different and how are they similar? People all speak of the Five Virtues, [but] who will judge them

faithfully? The Nine Territories all possess people with teachings, [but] who will transmit them? [When people] are already advanced in years **[Strip 4]** and have declined into old age, who will assist and serve them? Ghosts are born from [dead] humans, [so] what causes them to have divine insight? [Having died and become ghosts], their bones and flesh have decayed, [but] their wisdom is more evident. Why do they have this intelligence? Who understands their **[Strip 5]** strength? Ghosts are born from [dead] humans, so why do [humans] serve them? [After death] their bones and flesh have decayed and their bodies are lost, [so] to where do we offer their food? Their presence cannot be measured **[Strip 6]**, so how do [we know] when [they arrive for] their offerings. During the sacrificial ritual when do we present the offering? How do we give them their fill? When following the Way of Heaven, what do we consider the priority? If one desires **[Strip 7]** to bring harmony to the hundred clans, how [should] one make this happen? The spiritual power within ghosts, how does it eat? The wisdom of the Former Kings, how can it be perfected?"

I have heard it said: "Those who rise to **[Strip 8]** great heights [must come] from somewhere low. Those who travel far [must set out] from somewhere near. A tree with a girth of ten people began life as a lowly sprout. Legs aiming to cover a thousand *li* must start with a single inch. When the sun has **[Strip 9]** [two] ears, what is it hoping to hear? When the moon has a lunar halo, what is it hoping to rectify? Water flows to the east, [but] what is it trying to fill? When the sun has just risen, why is it both larger and less bright? When it reaches **[Strip 10]** noon, why is it both smaller and more dazzling?" I have once heard someone say: "What is higher than Heaven? What is broader than Earth? Who made Heaven? Who made Earth? Who made thunder? **[Strip 11]** Who made lightening? What does soil obtain to become level? What does water obtain to become clear? What do grasses and trees obtain to live? **[Strip 12A]** What do birds and beasts obtain to twitter and growl? **[Strip 13B]** Rain arrives, [but] who performed the rain sacrifice to darken [the Heavens]? Wind arrives, [but] who summoned it to rush after [everything]."

I have heard it said: "[If the ruler simply] holds the Way, sits unmoving in his seat, properly positions his crown, **[Strip 14]** and never participates in any [concrete] affairs, he will know in advance [the affairs] within the Four Seas, his hearing will reach a thousand *li*, and his sight will cover a hundred *li*. Consequently, when the sage resides in his position, all the state's **[Strip 16]** issues of peace and stability and danger and destruction related to rebels and bandits can be known in advance."

I have heard it said: “If the [intellectual] mind does not conquer the [impulsive] mind, then great disasters arise; if the [intellectual] mind can conquer the [impulsive] mind, [Strip 26] this is called ‘core understanding.’ What is the core understanding? Humans are pure through ‘holding.’ How do we know someone’s purity? Till the end of life they are naturally thus. Oh being able to rarely make statements! Oh being able to be One! [Strip 18] These are what are called ‘core attainments.’”

I have hear it said: “The hundred clans only honor the lord. The lord only honors the mind. The mind only honors the One. When you obtain the One and understand it, [Strip 28] you will follow Heaven above and reach all the way to the watery depths below. Sit and ponder it to find solutions for affairs a thousand *li* away; arise and use it to enact these throughout [all the lands within] the Four Seas.”

I have heard it said: “Realize sincerity to be wise; [Strip 15] hold to wisdom to have divine insight; hold to divine insight to be indistinguishable. Yet, holding to being indistinguishable is perilous; holding to peril is an untenable position; holding an untenable position then return again. This is the reason the old becomes new, people die [and then] once again become people, water returns [Strip 24] to the Heavens, and just like the moon things never fully die. They exit then enter again, end then begin again, wane then wax again. We hold to this reason which arises from One source.” [Strip 25]

I have heard it said: “The One birthed the Two, the Two birthed the Three, the Three birthed the Mother, and the Mother formed the Congelations. Consequently, possessing the One means there is nothing in the empire you will not possess. Lacking the One means in the empire you will not even possess a single thing. [When possessing it] even without [Strip 21] looking you can know [something’s] name, and without listening you can hear [something’s] sound. Grasses and trees grow because of it; birds and beasts twitter and growl because of it. Most distantly, [the One can] be presented to [Strip 13A] Heaven; most closely, [the One can] be offered to humanity. For this reason [Strip 12B] hold the Way to cultivate the self and rule the state.”

I have heard it said: “If you can hold the One, then the hundred things will not be lost; if you cannot hold the One, then [Strip 22] the hundred things will all be lost. If you seek to hold the One, look up to see it and look down to observe it. Do not go far to find it, but rely on the measure of your own self to reach it. Obtaining the One and [Strip 23] striving with it is like having the assistance of the entire world. Obtaining the One and pondering together with it is

like grasping the entire world. This One is the measure of Heaven and Earth. [Strip 17] Thus, concerning the One: gnawing on it, there is flavor; inhaling it, there is fragrance; drumming on it, there is sound; cozying up to it, it can be seen; holding it, it can be held. Shaking it, it is lost. Destroying it, it [Strip 19] shrivels. Damaging it, it disappears. We hold to this reason which arises from One source.”

I have heard it said: “With one statement [gain] unlimited power; with one statement possess the masses; [Strip 20] with one statement benefit the myriad people; with one statement [observe] the measure of Heaven and Earth. [As for the One] if you grasp it, grasp it firmly: if you release it, you will have nothing. At its grandest, [Strip 29] with it one can know the world; at its smallest, with it one can order a state. This power [of the One] is confirmed by antiquity, and in its lowliness [can obey] the highest [foundational existence]. [Strip 30]

MODERN CHARACTER TRANSCRIPTION

凡物流形，奚得而成？流形成體，奚得而不死？既成既生，奚呱而鳴？既本既根，奚後【簡1】之奚先？陰陽之序，奚得而固？水火之和，奚得而不厚？

聞之曰：民人流形，奚得而生？【簡2】流形成體，奚失而死，又得而成，未知左右之情。天地立終立始，天降五度乎，奚【簡3】橫奚縱？五氣并至乎，奚異奚同？五言在人，孰為之公？九域出誨，孰為之逢？既長而【簡4】又老，孰為侍奉？鬼生於人，奚故神明？骨肉之既靡，其智愈彰，其慧奚適？孰知其【簡5】強？鬼生於人乎，奚故事之？骨肉之既靡，身體不見乎，奚自食之？其來無度【簡6】乎，奚時之塞？祭祀奚升乎，如之何使飽？順天之道乎，奚以為首乎？欲得【簡7】百姓之和乎，奚事之？敬天之明奚得？鬼之神奚食？先王之智奚備？

聞之曰：登【簡8】高從卑，致遠從邇。十圍之木，其始生如蘖。足將至千里，必從寸始。日之有【簡9】耳，將何聽？月之有暈，將何征？水之東流，將何盈？日之始出，何故大而不耀？其入【簡10】中，奚故小益障？屢聞：天孰高與，地孰遠與。孰為天？孰為地？孰為雷？【簡11】孰為電？土奚得而平？水奚得而清？草木奚得而生？【簡12A】禽獸奚得而鳴？【簡13B】夫雨之至，孰零漆之？夫風之至，孰而屏之？

聞之曰：執道，坐不下席。端冕【簡14】，著不与事，先知四海，至聽千里，達見百里。是故聖人處於其所，邦家之【簡16】危安存亡，賊盜之作，可先知。

聞之曰：心不勝心，大亂乃作；心如能勝心，【簡26】是謂少彻。奚謂少彻？人白為執。奚以知其白？終身自若。能寡言乎，能一【簡18】乎，夫此之謂少成。

[聞之]曰：百姓之所貴，唯君；君之所貴，唯心；心之所貴，唯一。[一]得而解之，上【簡28】賓於天，下播於淵。坐而思之，謀於千里；起而用之，陳於四海。

聞之曰：至情而智，【簡15】執智而神，執神而同，執同而險，執險而困，執困而復。是故陳為新，人死復為人，水復【簡24】於天咸，百物不死如月。出則又入，終則又始，至則又反。執此言起於一端。【簡25】

聞之曰：一生兩，兩生叁，叁生母，母成結。是故有一，天下無不有；無一，天下亦無一有。無【簡21】[目]而知名，無耳而聞聲。草木得之以生，禽獸得之以鳴，遠之施【簡13A】天，近之薦人。是故【簡12B】執道，所以修身而治邦家。

聞之曰：能執一，則百物不失；如不能執一，則【簡22】百物俱失。如欲執一，仰而視之，俯而察之。毋遠求，度於身稽之。得一[而] 【簡23】圖之，如并天下而助之；得一而思之，若并天下而治之。[此]一以為天地稽。【簡17】是故一，咀之有味，嗅[之有臭]，鼓之有聲，近之可見，操之可操，握之則失，敗之則【簡19】槁，賊之則滅。執此言起於一端。

聞之曰：一言而終不窮，一言而有眾，【簡20】一言而萬民之利，一言而為天地稽。握之不盈握，敷之無所容，大【簡29】之以知天下，小之以治邦。之力，古之力，乃下上。【簡30】

APPENDIX 3: THE DIVINE INSIGHT OF SPIRITS AND GODS (GUISHEN ZHI MING) 《鬼神之明》

This text is another one of the Chu bamboo works housed by the Shanghai Museum. It consists of five strips (the fifth strip is shared with *Rongshi you chengshi* 《融師有成氏》) that are basically complete. It was compiled by Cao Jinyan in the fifth volume of the Shanghai Museum collection.¹ Here the ordering of the strips and the transcription of the modern characters is based on work of the original compiler but with some amendments adopted from Liao Mingchun 廖名春 and Chen Wei 陈伟.² [Translator's Note] The following translation is based on the author's personal reading of the text.

TRANSLATION

Presently, spirits and gods have that on which they are divinely insightful and that on which they are not divinely insightful, at least in regard to how they reward the good and punish the wicked. In ancient times, Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang were humane, righteous, sagely, and wise, and so the empire modeled them. In this way they were honored as the Sons of Heaven, [Strip 1] possessed the wealth of the empire, their long lives were filled with praise, and their stories were passed down through the ages. That these were the rewards of the spirits and gods is clear. In the times of the tyrants Jie, Zhou, You, and Li, they burned sages, killed remonstrators, robbed the common people, and brought chaos to the state. Because of this Jie was broken at Mount Li, Zhou's head [was presented] at Zhishe. [Strip 2: Back] They did not fulfill their proper lifespans and were ridiculed by the whole world. [Strip 2] That these were the punishments of the spirits and gods is clear. [However,] in the time of Wu Zixu, the whole world considered him a sage, but his corpse was dumped into the river in a leather bag. Duke Yi of Rong was someone who brought chaos to the empire, but he enjoyed a long life and died

a natural death. Relying on these examples to closely investigate it, [we must say] that sometimes the good are not rewarded and sometimes the wicked [Strip 3] are not punished. Therefore, I propose that spirits and gods lack of divine insight must have its reason. Do they have the power and capacity to make it so, but do not? I do not know. Do they wish their power was firm, but are incapable of making it so? I also do not know. These two diverge, and thus [Strip 4] I say, “This is what is referred to as the spirits and gods having that on which they are divinely insightful and that on which they are not divinely insightful.” [Strip 5]

MODERN CHARACTER TRANSCRIPTION

今夫鬼神有所明，有所不明，則以其賞善罰暴也。昔者堯舜禹湯仁義聖智，天下法之。此以貴為天子，【簡1】富有天下，長年有譽，後世述之。則鬼神之賞，此明矣。及桀紂幽厲，焚聖人，殺諫者，賊百姓，亂邦家。[此以桀折於鬲山，而紂首於歧社]【簡2背】，身不沒，為天下笑。則鬼【簡2】[神之罰，此明]矣。及伍子胥者，天下之聖人也，鸕夷而死。榮夷公者，天下之亂人也，長年而沒。如以此詰之，則善者或不賞，而暴【簡3】[者或不罰。故]吾因加鬼神不明，則必有故。其力能致焉而弗為乎？吾弗知也；意其力固不能致焉乎？吾又弗知也。此兩者歧，吾故【簡4】[曰：鬼神有]所明，有所不明。此之謂乎！【簡5】

APPENDIX 4: *THE THREE VIRTUES* (*SAN DE*) 《三德》

This text is also found within the Shanghai Museum collection of Chu bamboo manuscripts. It has a total of 22 strips, including both those that are perfectly preserved and those that are damaged; one of these strips is stored at the Chinese University of Hong Kong Institute of Chinese Studies. The text was compiled by Li Ling 李零 and published in the fifth volume of the Shanghai Museum's texts.¹ Here the order and transcription of the strips incorporates the insights of Chen Jian 陈剑, Cao Feng 曹峰, Gu Shikao 顾史考, and Wang Chenxi 王晨曦.² There are numerous lacuna in this text, and so there are still many philological problems that require investigation. This transcription uses the “□” symbol to indicate a missing character. [Translator's Note] The following translation is based on the author's personal reading of the text.

TRANSLATION

Heaven provides [the world] seasons, Earth provides [the world] materials, and humanity provides [the world] manpower. If the enlightened king can be without his own thoughts [and accord with the different natures of Heaven, Earth, and humanity], then he can be said [to possess] the Three Virtues. Grasses and tree must await the [proper] season before they begin to flourish. What Heaven hates do not love: at sunrise do not cry, at dusk do not sing, and at the half and full moons [prepare for sacrifice] in the fasting hall. This is what is called following Heaven's Constant [Way]. [**Strip 1**] The emperor said, “[The following] has been established: Do speak in a domineering way. Do not put yourself before others. Do undertake major projects. Do not harm the Constant [Way]. Do not obstruct rivers. Do not break sewage channels. Do not cease the sacrifices to the ancestors. Do not abandon the burial rituals. Do not change prohibitions. Do not change established affairs. Do not bother aunts or sisters-in-law. Do not [**Strip 10**] bring shame to your fathers and brothers.

Do not humiliate the poor. Do not mock those who have received corporal punishment. Do not [dare to] measure the depths of the rivers. Do not [dare to] measure the heights of the mountains. Do not be carefree with your body or boastful with your words. Your behavior must not be lazy. In handling affairs you must not seek ease. Do not extinguish goodness and do not enact the inauspicious. When entering valleys do not make music, [**Strip 11**] and while climbing hills do not sing. These are what are considered Heaven's Rituals. [**Strip 12**] [Attain the] protection of Supreme Heaven and then there will be no calamitous disasters. Gao Yang said, "Do not wear inauspicious clothing when offering sacrifices. Do not wear extravagant clothing in ritual spaces. To do so is called 'forgetting the gods'..." [**Strip 9**]

Respect the prohibitions of Heaven, promote the rules of Earth, [and then] the Constant Way will indeed be level [and easy to walk]. Oh Heaven! Oh Humanity! On what close connections do you rely on till the end of your days? To know Heaven, you must simply follow the seasons; to know Earth, you must simply grasp the materials; to know humanity, you must simply gather [people] close. If you do not exert yourself in the completion [of affairs] and [**Strip 17**] listen to [your own] trivial [impulses], then the hundred affairs will not be handled and your prized affairs will not be complete. Venerating Heaven and serving the ruler requires seriousness and [things] must be [handled with] integrity. Look down to observe the patterns of Earth and do your utmost in the work of farming. Do not do anything beyond your capacity. Do not change that at which you are capable. Do not impede the people's proper [farming] season or a great famine will certainly arrive. [**Strip 15**] When you impede the people's [farming] season with construction projects, this is called "interrupting production." If you lack concern for others suffering, you will indeed lose their love and support. When you impede the people's [farming] season with irrigation projects, this is called a "flood." If you are joyful during funerals, people from all four directions will cry out. When you impede the people's [farming] season by going to war, this is [**Strip 16**] called a "plague." With these types of disasters the whole harvest fails, as none can raise a sickle for the reaping... If you do not delay the [farming] season, Shangdi will be happy and there will be no calamitous disasters... [**Hong Kong Strip**] Heaven never fails to obey [people's good behavior]. Those who love the good, Heaven will obey them; those who love happiness, Heaven will obey them; those who love prosperity, Heaven will obey them; those who love the enduring, Heaven will obey them. Follow the seasons

of Heaven. Engage the materials of Earth. Use the manpower of the people.... **[Strip 18]**

Those who respect [Heaven] achieve it. Those who neglect [Heaven] lose it. This is called Heaven's Constant [Way]. [Follow] the prohibition of the God of Heaven. Do not cheat or deceive, and August Heaven will adore you. Do not swindle or trick, for Shangdi will hate you. When [something should be] forbidden but is not made forbidden, Heaven will send down disasters. When [something should be] stopped but is not stopped, **[Strip 2]** Heaven will send down anomalies. [The consequences of these events] not only affect yourself, but also your sons and grandsons. [When something should be] bright and [visible] but is [dark and] obscured, this is called "Great Distress." [When something should be dark and] obscured but is bright [and visible], this is called "Inauspicious." Fully respect all ritual distinctions: the division of outer and inner, the separation of men and women. These are called "Heaven's Rituals." Honor it, Honor it, and then the Mandate of Heaven will be great and bright. **[Strip 3]** Whoever opposes it will certainly meet calamity and ruin. Do not denounce government officials in the home of the spirits. Do not enjoy a carefree life of leisure. Harming your family because of scheming for profit, this is called "transgression." When the ruler cannot manage his ministers, this is called "danger." The destruction of the state is [something that induces] anxiety and fear and must be understood. [At times when you must,] you do not say **[Strip 4]** "dare not," you do not say "no." Consequently, this is continually detrimental, for the state has lost the root and the Constant [Way]. If you have a small state, it will certainly be harmed. If you have a large state, there will be major destruction. If you alter the Constant [Way] and change ritual practices, the Earth will split and the people will perish. Wonderful! Wonderful! Three times wonderful! The foundation of prosperity is to correct your mistakes. **[Strip 5]**

... negligent and not following his own wishes, the superior person greatly respects its virtue. Within the far reaches of the four directions everything is the concern of Shangdi. Use benevolence in dealing with the people and there will be no one who will not feel **[Strip 22]** close [to him]. Endlessly energize the people's undertakings, continue the kindnesses of the past, and look to a [better] future. What the people love, Shangdi protects. Generally relying on the people to evaluate the officials, this is called "stabilizing the state." Relying on the officials to evaluate the people, this is called "ruining the state." Establishing the five officials but not employing them, this is called "rebellion." The

Earth will split, and the people will **[Strip 6]** be ruined. . . **[Strip 17]** When a state loves ostentatiousness and extravagance, this is called a “temporary splendor.” Although [the state] may be rich, it certainly will [soon] become impoverished. When the palace halls exceed the proper standards [of size and lavishness], this is what August Heaven hates. Even though they are completed, they are unsuitable for habitation. When robes and garments exceed the proper proportions, losing their beauty, this is called “violating the rules.” Even Shangdi does not forgive this. By sacrificing to the spirits and gods [at the proper times with the proper rituals], Shangdi becomes happy and the state will not be **[Strip 8]** lost. When [the ruler’s] happiness and joy are without proper timing or measure, this is called a “Great Famine.” August Heaven will not forgive this, and will indeed respond with misfortunes. When all eating and drinking is without limit or purpose, this is called a “Dreadful Flood.” Shangdi will not forgive this, and will indeed respond with crop failure. When Shangdi is not forgiving, he will not partake in the sacrificial offerings.

Capitals near rivers, towns along the shores, homes with a hundred chariots, compounds with ten buildings, palace halls, and cesspools, all must strictly follow the [standards of] measure and not lose the [principles] of the Way. Whoever will carrying out executions must not drink and must not eat. The bonds of [convicts] must not be made too tight, **[Strip 12]** [as slightly] loosening them presents no danger. When doling out severe punishments, you should be sorrowful; when carrying out executions, you should be regretful. What the people desire, the spirits and gods will protect. Hold fast to humility and sincerity. . . **[Strip 20]** If [the ruler] makes amusement his priority, his body will become sick and he will hate [the sight of] food and drink. His state will near collapse, and he will hate the advice of the sage. His family will near destruction, and he will not maintain the sacrifices. He will only care for amusement. When this is the case, if he does not face great violence, he will at least suffer great disgrace. When Heaven seeks your defeat, it first fulfills your desires and **[Strip 13]** removes your worries. It first makes your prosper, but then casts you aside without mercy. In [the early stages of] planning, do not rule anything out. If you want life to flourish, do not kill. If you want equality, do not make divisions. These are the origins of harm, and thus Heaven will send one calamity after another, relentless and unending. Be good and fortune will follow; do evil and misfortune will manifest. Low **[Strip 14]** walls should not be raised. Useless people should not be employed. What August Heaven rejects is what the emperor hates.

Darkness is called the obscuring, [and even when dark] Heaven above [still observes] the governmental affairs below...[Strip 19]...[If you are not careful, small] tangerine [branches] and tree stumps can overturn a chariot. [If they are not careful,] someone skilled at swimming [Strip 21] [can] die under a bridge. A careless tiger can be eaten by a lion cub...[Strip 18]

MODERN CHARACTER TRANSCRIPTION

天供時，地供材，民供力，明王無思，是謂三德。卉木須時而後奮。天惡毋忤，平旦毋哭，晦毋歌，弦望齋宿。是謂順天之常。

【簡1】皇后曰：“立，毋為角言，毋為人倡；毋作大事，毋害常；毋壅川，毋斷洿；毋滅宗，毋虛床；毋改故，毋變事；毋煩姑嫂，毋【簡10】耻父兄；毋羞貧，毋笑刑；毋揣深，毋度山；毋逸其身，而多其言；居毋惰，作毋康；善勿滅，不祥勿為；入虛毋樂，登【簡11】丘毋歌。所以為天禮。”上天之保，乃無凶災。【簡12】高陽曰：“毋凶服以享祀，毋錦衣綬褻子，是謂忘神。□□□□□□□□□□□□”【簡9】

敬天之敵，興地之矩，恒道必平。天哉人哉，凭何親哉，沒其身哉。知天足以順時，知地足以固材，知人足以會親。不修其成，而【簡17】聽其繁，百事不遂，慮事不成。仰天事君，嚴恪必信。俯視[地理]，務農敬戒。毋不能而為之，毋能而易之。驟奪民時，大飢必來。【簡15】奪民時以土攻，是謂稽，不絕（繼）憂恤，必喪其匹；奪民時以水事，是謂激，喪以繼樂，四方來囂；奪民時以兵事，是【簡16】[謂厲，禍因胥歲，不舉銓艾]。□□□□□□□□□□□□□□不懈於時，上帝喜之，乃無凶災。□□□□□□【香港簡】天無不從。好昌天從之，好祓天從之，好旺天從之，好長天從之。順天之時，起地之財，[盡]民之[力] □□□□□。【簡18】

敬者得之，怠者失之。是謂天常。天神之[敵，毋為欺誑]，皇天將興之；毋為偽詐，上帝將憎之。忌而不忌，天乃降災；已而不已，【簡2】天乃降異。其身不沒，至於孫子。陽而幽，是謂大戚；幽而陽，是謂不祥。齊齊節節，外內有辨，男女有節，是謂天禮。敬之敬之，天命孔明。【簡3】如反之，必遇凶殃。毋詬政卿於神次，毋享逸安。求利殘其親，是謂罪；君無主臣，是謂危。邦家其壞，憂懼之間，疏達之次，毋謂之【簡4】不敢，毋謂之不然。故常不利，邦失干常。小邦則殘，大邦過傷。變常易禮，土地乃坼，民乃夭死。善哉善哉三善哉，唯福之基，邇改。【簡5】

[□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□]疏未可以遂，君子丕慎其德。四荒之內，是帝之关。臨民以仁，民莫弗【簡22】親。興興民事，行往視來。民之所喜，上帝是佑。凡度官於

NOTES

PROLEGOMENON

1. We must be careful not to promote extreme perspectives concerning the significance of these finds. Both claims that the excavated bamboo and silk manuscripts completely invalidate our previous knowledge or that they have not really altered much of anything are equally simplistic approaches to this material; they do not really assist in accurately determining the true value of the excavated texts. This parallels the view that both total doubt and total belief offers nothing to human understanding. Concerning these two false perspectives, Henri Poincaré offered this fine critique, “To doubt everything or to believe everything are two equally convenient solutions; both dispense with the necessity of reflection.” Henri Poincaré, *Science and Hypothesis* (London: Walter Scott Publishing, 1905), xxii.
2. For more on this issue, see Li Xueqin 李学勤, *Jianbo shiji yu xueshushi* 简帛佚籍与学术史 (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001); Kakuten Sokan kenkyū kai 郭店楚简研究会, ed., *Sochi shutsudo shiryō no Chūgoku kodai bunka* 楚地出土资料与中国古代文化 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin 汲古书院, 2002); Qiu Xigui 裘锡圭, *Zhongguo chutu guwenxian shijiang* 中国出土古文献十讲 (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue chubanshe, 2004); Asano Yuichi 浅野裕一, *Kodai shishōshi no Kakuten Sokan* 古代思想史と郭店楚简 (Tokyo: Kyūko shoin 汲古书院, 2005); Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久, *Chitian Zhijiu jianbo yanjiu lunji* 池田知久简帛研究论集, trans. Cao Feng 曹峰 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006).
3. Carl Becker said, “History is the memory of the events that have occurred in the past.” “Cultural traditions” are refined and habituated recollections of history and their selections are chosen for their continuity. “History,” in the historical memory of early China played an extremely important role. In fact, one of the major continuous features of Chinese culture has been the integration of institutionalized “historical memory” and the pursuit of immortalized personal thoughts. See Carl Becker, “Everyman His Own Historian” *The American Historical Review*, vol. 37n2 (Jan. 1932), 222; Carl Becker, *Everyman His Own Historian* (New York: F. S. Crofts and Co., 1935).

4. Of course, the limits of historical memory also result from an active process of “selection.”
5. Liao Mingchun 廖名春, *Xie zai jianbo shang de wenming—Changjiang liuyu de jiandu he boshu* 写在简帛上的文明——长江流域的简牍和帛书 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Daxue chubanshe, 2011).
6. “The progenitors of the Yin dynasty (Shang dynasty) had *ce* 册 ‘bamboo strip records’ and *dian* 典 ‘large table-size bamboo strip records.’” See Mu Ping 慕平 ed., *Shangshu* 尚书 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 228. [Translator’s note] Even in the modern forms of these characters, one can see the depictions of vertical bamboo strips tied with horizontal cords.
7. Tomohisa, *Ikede Tomohisa jianbo yanjiu lunji*, 5.
8. *Zhuangzi* 6/17/1-20. [All citations from the classics come from the ICS concordance series unless otherwise indicated.]
9. *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu zhengli xiaozu* 马王堆汉墓帛书整理小组, *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu: yi* 马王堆汉墓帛书: 壹 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1974), 1:87.
10. *Laozi* 42A /15/5.
11. See Li Ling 李零, *Guodian Chujiang jiaodu ji* 郭店楚简校读记 (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2002), 32.
12. *Lunyu* 6.22/13/29.
13. *Guoyu* 6.10 /105/29-30.
14. *Guoyu* 6.10 /106/1.
15. *Guoyu* 6.10 /105/29-30.
16. Sun Xidan 孫希旦 ed., *Liji jijie* 禮記集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1309–1310.
17. *Lunyu* 7.21/16/17.
18. Wang Yunwu 王雲五 ed., *Lunyu jijie yishu* 語語集解義疏 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1927), 94.
19. Ibid.
20. Ma Chengyuan 马承源, *Shanghai Bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chuguo shu* 上海博物馆藏战国楚简书, vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002), 117–118.
21. Whether or not this lost text should be identified with the Huang-Lao tradition still requires further debate.

1 THE COSMOLOGY OF *THE GREAT ONE BIRTHED WATER*

1. It has been generally understood that China’s “mythological thought” is comparatively underdeveloped, and that all major mythological records appear fairly late. However, following the discovery of the Warring States silk manuscripts at Changsha’s Chanziku, we now know that mythological creation narratives appeared much earlier. See Sarah Allen, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997).

96. This translation follows Knoblock with some minor alterations. See John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works*, vol. II (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 246–247; *Xunzi*16/78/10–16.
97. *Xunzi*12/57/3–6.
98. This translation generally follows Koblock. See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. II, 247; *Xunzi*16/78/16–18.
99. This translation occasionally accords with Knoblock. See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, vol. II, 245; *Xunzi*16/77/16–17.
100. According to Sima Qian's records, when Shang Yang 商鞅 arrived in Qin, he first expounded on the "Way of Thearchs" *Didao* 帝道 and the Way of Kings, but Duke Xiao of Qin 秦孝公 was uninterested. However, when he explained the Way of Hegemons, Duke Xiao became excited and eventually gave Shang Yang a position. See *Shiji*68.2 228.
101. *Xunzi jijie*, 300.
102. *Xunzi*15/72/1–7.
103. *Shuibudi Qinmu zhujian zhengli xiaozu* 睡虎地秦墓竹简整理小组, ed., *Shuibudi Qin mu zhujian* 睡虎地秦墓竹简 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1990).
104. Makesi Weibo 马克斯·韦伯 (Max Weber), *Xueshu yu zhengzhi* 学术与政治 [*Wissenschaft als Beruf Politik als Beruf*] (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1998), 103.
105. *Ibid.*, 116.

APPENDIX 1 THE GREAT ONE BIRTHED WATER
(*TAIYI SHENG SHUI*) 《太一生水》

1. See *Guodian Chumu zhujian* 郭店楚墓竹简 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1998), 125–126.
2. See Qiu Xigui 裘锡, "Taiyi shengshui 'Ming Zi' zhangjie" 《太一生水》“名字”章解释——兼论〈太一生水〉的分章问题, in *Zhongguo chutu wenxian shijiang* 中国出土文献十讲 (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2004), 248–251; Li Ling 李零, *Guodian Chujian jiaodu ji (zengding ben)* 郭店楚简校读记 (增订本) (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin daxue chubanshe, 2007), 41–55; Zhao Jianwei 赵建伟 "Guodian Chumu zhujian Taiyi shengshui shuzheng" 郭店楚墓竹简《太一生水》疏证, in *Daojia wenhua yanjiu* 道家文化研究 17 (Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1999): 380–392.

APPENDIX 2 ALL THINGS FORMS IN FLUX
(*FANWU LIUXING*) 《凡物流形》

1. Shen Pei 沈培 略说《上博〈七〉》新见的“一”字, Fudan daxue guwenzi wang 复旦大学古文字网, entry posted on December, 31, 2008; Li Rui 李锐, "Fanwu liuxing shiwen xinbian (gao)" 《凡物流形》释文新编 (稿), Kongzi 2000 wang 孔子2000网, entry

posted on December 31, 2008; Gu Shikao 顾史考, “Shang Bo qi *Fanwuliuxing* jianxu ji yundu xiaobu” 上博七《凡物流形》简序及韵读小补, Wuhan daxue jianbo wang 武汉大学简帛网, February 23, 2009; 王中江 Wang Zhongjiang 《凡物流形》编联新见, Jianbo yanjiu wang 简帛研究网, entry posted March, 3, 2009; Fudan daxue chutu wenxian yu gudai Wenzi yangjiu zhongxin yangjiusheng dushuhui 复旦大学出土文献与古文字研究中心研究生读书会, ed., “*Shang Bo (Qi) · Fanwu liuxing* Chongbian shiwen” 《上博（七）·凡物流形》重编释文, Fudan daxue guwenzi wang 复旦大学古文字网, entry posted December 31, 2008.

APPENDIX 3 THE DIVINE INSIGHT OF SPIRITS AND GODS (GUISHEN ZHI MING) 《鬼神之明》

1. Ma Chengyuan 马承源, ed., *Shanghai Bowuguan Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物馆藏战国楚竹书, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 307–320.
2. See Liao Mingchu 廖名春, “Du *Shang Bo wu · Guishen zhi ming* pian zhaji” 《读〈上博五·鬼神之明〉篇札记》 Kongzi 2000 wang 孔子2000网, entry posted February 19, 2006. See Chen Wei 陈伟氏, “Shang Bo wu *Guishen zhi ming* pian chudu” 《上博五《鬼神之明》篇初读》, Jianbo yanjiuwang 简帛研究网, entry posted February 18, 2006.

APPENDIX 4 THE THREE VIRTUES (SAN DE) 《三德》

1. Ma Chengyuan 马承源, ed., *Shanghai Bowuguan Zhanguo Chu zhushu* 上海博物馆藏战国楚竹书, vol. 5 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 287–303.
2. Chen Jian 陈剑. “*San De* zhujian bianlian de yichu buzheng” 《三德》竹简编联的一处补正, Jianbo wang 简帛网, entry posted April 1, 2006; Cao Feng 曹峰, “*San De* de bianlian yu fen zhang” 《三德》的编联与分章, in *Shang Bo Chujian sixiang yanjiu* 上博楚简思想研究 (Taipei: Taiwan wanjuanlou tushu gufen youxian gongsi, 2006), 173–232; 顾史考, “Shang Bo zhushu *San De* pian zhuzhang qianjie” 上博竹书《三德》篇逐章浅解, in *Qu Wanli xiansheng bailsui danchen guoji xueshu yantaohui wenji* 屈万里先生百岁诞辰国际学术研讨会论文集 (September 2006): 269–310.

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